

June 8, 1956

Dr. M. R. Pollock  
National Institute for Medical Research  
Mill Hill, London NW 7

Dear Dr. Pollock:

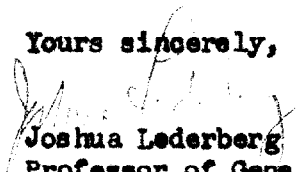
Thank you for your message of May 31, and for your trouble in sending the penicillinase preparation.

I would like to renew my request for cereus 5 and 5B, but with so many parties involved, I should give a candid explanation so there will be no misunderstanding. Since my last writing, I think I have definitely interested Professor Johnson in following up the chemical angles of some recent morphological findings on the m/o of penicillin. [I hope to be able to send you an ms. on this in a few weeks]. It seemed to me that it would be a definite economy to pursue these studies with bacterial strains that have already been well characterized from other viewpoints. It would be a definite advantage to us to use a penicillinase-negative bacillus, if it is otherwise amenable, and possibly make comparisons with penicillinase-positive mutants. However, Johnson tells me that he would inevitably have to make a preliminary study of fixation. We would be delighted to take advantage of your own data on this point when they are available. I agree with Johnson that we should not accept cultures on any conditional basis that might limit his freedom of thought and action, as there is no telling where (besides up the garden path) the pursuit of a problem can lead. I am deliberately exaggerating the potential issue, and I want to assure you of my cordial appreciation for this material whenever you decide that it would be appropriate to send it. There is no great urgency here as there are a number of preliminaries to be completed before the main problem is reached, though it will be convenient for us to assemble a variety of strains for cursory examination.

I was much interested in your remarks about the possible prevalence of penicillins in nature; what will the patent attorneys think of that?

My wife and I are hoping it will be possible for us to visit Australia next spring, and if the finances can be arranged, to make a circumglobal tour of it. The entire scheme is very tentative now, but we will neglect no opportunity that may arise to visit you and other British colleagues and friends. Professor Pontecorvo who has been visiting us recently will probably be one source of information on our plans, having offered his good offices on the matter of an visit to the UK.

Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Gene